



Review

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public fictions precisely styled to accommodate such men. Similar to the notion of "value stretch," the author conceives of the shadow system as "derivative, insubstantial, and co-occurring with the parent system" as if it were "... a shadow cast by the common value system in the distorting lower-class setting." (p. 213)

Consequently, Liebow is lead to reject some current conceptions, popular among those who wish to see the lower-class Negro as a "noble savage" and those who argue that there is a "culture of poverty," a distinctive "black American culture," or a separate lower-class value system. He views the streetcorner Negro's behavior as a direct response to restricted opportunities, to racism and discrimination, not to any "mute compliance with historical or cultural imperatives." (p. 208) He states his case forcefully: "... the streetcorner man does not appear as a carrier of an independent cultural tradition. . . . It is rather the cultural model of the larger society as seen through the prism of repeated failure." (pp. 221-222) The similarities between father and son, mother and daughter, are less "cultural transmission" than the harsh fact that the son and daughter go out and independently experience the same failures. The issue of meaningful social change, Liebow contends, is not to destroy "a distinctive cultural pattern 'with an integrity of its own,'" but rather to revamp drastically the social machinery that repeatedly creates these look-alike failures.

Such an argument is a needed correction to the fashionable excesses of Oscar Lewis, Walter Miller, and some "Black Power" ideologues. But like most corrections, it swings a bit too sharply in the opposite direction. There is some degree of cultural transmission in the bowels of this ghetto; and responses originally fashioned by a restricted environment can become so normative and "functionally autonomous" as not to cease when the environment improves. This is precisely the danger of this nation's ever-increasing isolation of its population segments in the core of central cities, and this is why dispersal strategies are at least as important as those of ghetto enrichment.

In any event, *Tally's Corner* can be warmly recommended for classroom use. With the usual qualifications (the method is selective, streetcorner men comprise only one among many types of urban lower-class Negroes, etc.), this paperback furnishes engaging and timely reading as a supplementary text for a wide variety of courses ranging from urban sociology and race relations to social deviance and field methods.

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The Political Beliefs of Americans. By LLOYD A. FREE AND HADLEY CANTRIL. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968. xiv, 239 pp. \$10.00.

Among the numerous sub-fields of the modern discipline called "political behavior," none has been more thoroughly explored than the opinions, attitudes, belief systems and voting behavior of the American electorate. Many of the findings and insights of the research teams at Columbia and Michigan, of Herbert McClosky, Seymour Lipset and the late V. O. Key, among many others, have rapidly become part of the folk wisdom of both political science and sociology. With the addition of models of electoral behavior such as those of Anthony Downs and William Riker, the tantalizing possibility of a verifiable, probabilistic theory of the political behavior of mass publics has become something more than a dream.

Yet, *The Political Beliefs of Americans*, by Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril (who contributed only the brief concluding chapter) is written in almost total disregard of the more than twenty-five years of electoral research and theory which preceded it. This little volume consists of a simple presentation and analysis of, primarily, 1964 Gallup Poll data. Aside from making this information available in a single source, Mr. Free offers the reader little of value.

We are informed that the large majority of Americans are "Operational Liberals" because they support most or all of six Federal social or economic welfare programs, but that exactly one-half are "Ideological Conservatives" because they tend to oppose, in the abstract, Federal intervention into state and personal matters. To be an ideological conservative, one must agree with five simple assertions. Mr. Free should have heard of "acquiescence-response set," since his collaborator discussed the problem, in terms of impoverished frames of reference, as long ago as 1941.

Although specifically written for "the politician and the student of practical politics," I doubt whether many members of the intended audience will be surprised to discover that the well-to-do, white, Protestant resident of a small town is more likely to identify as a Republican, to have voted for Goldwater and to be more "conservative" than citizens lacking these attributes. Nor is it a recent discovery that few Americans are concerned with abstract ideological political formulations.

While, as suggested, most of the findings are, at their level of presentation, no different from those reported earlier and elsewhere, some of the methodological decisions cast serious doubt on the utility of these data for further analysis.

A respondent could be categorized, "operationally" or "ideologically," if he answered other than "don't know" to at least one-half of the relevant questions. No numerical cell entries are offered anywhere, and they cannot be inferred accurately from the cross-tabulated percentages given. Added to some dubious historical assertions ("The traditional political ideology in America stems from the compact signed aboard the Mayflower in 1620"), gross linguistic errors ("isolationist and neutralistic") and the poverty of the analysis ("On the basis of socioeconomic status alone, Catholics should be no more Democratic than Protestants and Jews much less so . . . This study can go only a short way in trying to explain . . . [the reverse] phenomenon."), the weaknesses in data handling make it impossible to recommend this book.

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The Social Stratification of English in New York City. BY WILLIAM LABOV. Washington, D.C.: Office of Information and Publications, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966. iv, 655 pp. \$5.00 (Paperback).

The grand title of this book is not misleading. Labov sets out to describe the sound system of English as spoken by natives of the language residing in New York City; to determine the linguistic and social factors underlying variations in such usage; to describe and account for recent changes in the sound system; and to develop predictions regarding linguistic changes to come. A research team pursuing all of these ends in a community of modest size would be a bold venture; attempting the task almost singlehandedly in the metropolis is a wondrous act. Even a scholar thoroughly trained and highly inventive in *both* sociology and structural linguistics (where is such a man?) would find the job most difficult. Viewed from my standpoint as a sociologist untrained in structural linguistics, the work is both a *tour de force* and a disappointment.

Labov first shatters a crippling conceit which has long thwarted the cumulation of fact and theory in the subject area; namely, that exhaustive interviews with a handful of informants chosen unsystematically are sufficient to disclose the important patterns of usage in a given place. Though some linguists have exposed this fallacy before, Labov's masterful analysis of the relevant earlier studies in New York City places the position forever beyond defense.

How then might one ascertain the basic linguistic patterns of native New Yorkers? Labov starts wisely by using as the sampling frame respondents interviewed two years earlier (1961) in the Mobilization for Youth survey of residents of the Lower East Side. As he notes, linguistic studies are apt to be done by single investigators on small budgets, hence research efficiency is enhanced by re-interviewing respondents who were originally chosen through appropriate sampling techniques. The resulting sample is superior to that which most linguists could select, and by utilizing the non-linguistic data collected in the prior survey, the researcher saves a good deal of interviewing time for linguistics alone. But at this point the disadvantages imposed by limited resources become formidable. One man and a part-time assistant cannot complete as many interviews as can a well-financed research team. Inevitably, sample members from the hard-to-get groups (in the present case, men and Catholics) pile up among the nonrespondents. Labov believes that the sample obtained is adequate to reveal "the structure of linguistic and social variation within the language of New York City." (p. 198) It is a tribute to his talent and energy that the point is debatable. Progress in sociolinguistics surely will be served if single investigators take on less gargantuan tasks.

The book is plagued by insensitivity to questions of reliability. There is the problem of the transferability of various eliciting techniques: can other investigators achieve similar results through their use? More crucial is the problem of transcriber reliability. Though most of the interviewing and apparently all of the transcribing were done by Labov, one may wonder seriously about the comparability of coding sound-subtleties over hundreds of hours of speech data. Nowhere in the book are these issues faced successfully. Nor is another serious flaw of over-burdening minute numbers of cases with complex analyses. I believe most of the trends Labov discerns are present in the data, but the analysis frequently fails to establish their presence convincingly.

Though the book's weaknesses are not minor, Labov redeems the work through his amazing creative gifts. Innovations of linguistic technique along with original and bold hypotheses flow steadily through the book. Labov's ideas regarding the present stratification of speech in New York City, his insights into the generative influences underlying change in speech patterns, and his predictions for the direction of change in speech among New Yorkers should stimulate research over the next generation. And the ingenious demonstration of linguistic stratifica-